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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
October 28, 2019

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Baker-Polito Administration Highlights Housing Choice Bill in Quincy

Local leaders endorse legislation that aims to support communities statewide in their goals to increase new housing production

QUINCY – Today, Governor Charlie Baker, Lieutenant Governor Karyn Polito, Secretary of Housing and Economic Development Mike Kennealy and Undersecretary of Housing and Community Development Janelle Chan joined Quincy Mayor Tom Koch, Jimmy Liang of Fuji Restaurant Group, Dolly Di Pesa of Di Pesa and Company and other local leaders to highlight *An Act to Promote Housing Choices*, [legislation filed by Governor Baker in February](#) that calls for targeted zoning reform to advance new housing production in Massachusetts and support the Administration's goal to produce 135,000 new housing units by 2025.

"Our Commonwealth faces a housing shortage that threatens the future of the families and innovative companies driving our remarkable success," **said Governor Charlie Baker**. "In order to build the amount of housing we need to stabilize rents and home prices, we must pass *An Act to Promote Housing Choices* so communities can deliver critical projects with majority support."

"Century-old zoning laws pose a major obstacle to building adequate, affordable housing for residents," **said Lt. Governor Karyn Polito**. "Our administration will continue to work closely with local leaders to leverage every tool at our disposal to promote the production of housing across the Commonwealth, so more communities like Quincy can continue to grow and succeed."

Today's event in downtown Quincy celebrated the City's efforts to promote transit-oriented housing and development, in order to ensure that Quincy continues to grow and remains affordable to residents of all income levels. According to [The Boston Foundation](#), Quincy was one of just 15 municipalities that together obtained more than half of the Commonwealth's building permits between 2013 and 2017, making the City a leader in tackling the statewide housing crisis, which is particularly acute in Boston and neighboring communities like Quincy. These efforts earned Quincy designation as

a [Housing Choice community](#), in recognition for the city's success in adopting best practices and increasing the housing stock by more than 3% over the last five years.

The Housing Choice legislative proposal will enable cities and towns to adopt certain zoning best practices related to housing production by a simple majority vote, rather than the current two-thirds supermajority. While this legislation will lower the voting threshold to change zoning for all communities in the Commonwealth, it does not require cities and towns to make any of these changes. With the proposed simple majority threshold, municipalities that pursue rezoning efforts including those enabling transit-oriented or downtown-oriented new housing, would gain approval if they achieve more than 50 percent of the vote, as opposed to the current super majority of more than 66 percent. Massachusetts is currently one of only a few states to require a supermajority to change local zoning.

Zoning changes that promote best practices for housing growth that would qualify for the simple majority threshold include:

- Building mixed-use, multi-family, and starter homes, and adopting 40R "Smart Growth" zoning in town centers and near transit.
- Allowing the development of accessory dwelling units, or "in-law" apartments.
- Approving Smart Growth or Starter Homes districts that put housing near existing activity centers.
- Granting increased density through a special permit process.
- Allowing for the transfer of development rights and enacting natural resource protection zoning.
- Reducing parking requirements and dimensional requirements, such as minimum lot sizes.

This legislation also includes a provision, added by the Joint Committee on Housing last session, that would reduce the voting threshold for a special permit issued by a local permit granting authority to a simple majority vote, for certain multi-family or mixed-use projects with at least 10 percent affordable units in locations near transit or, in centers of commercial activity within a municipality.

"Despite our unprecedented economic growth, the cost of housing has continued to climb as housing production remains stagnant throughout Massachusetts, thanks to outdated zoning laws that too often thwart even projects popular with residents," **said Secretary of Housing and Economic Development Mike Kennealy**. "We will continue to advocate for *An Act to Promote Housing Choices* so communities can produce the adequate, affordable housing necessary for businesses, their employees, and their families before they are forced to move elsewhere."

"Our families, seniors, workforce, individuals with disabilities, and vulnerable populations have diverse housing needs, and today's market is not meeting them. Housing that our residents can afford is a crucial resource and *An Act to Promote Housing Choices* will create the tools we need to promote new housing development for those across incomes," **said Undersecretary of Housing and Community Development Janelle Chan**. "We are proud of the coalition we've built in support of this legislation and the investments we've made in affordable housing, community development, and public housing to benefit the many communities that contribute to our strong, inclusive Commonwealth."

Local community and business leaders including Jimmy Liang of Fuji Restaurant Group and Dolly Di Pesa of Di Pesa and Company joined Mayor Koch in endorsing the legislation.

“There’s no question Quincy is doing its part to solve this very real housing crisis, and Governor Baker’s Housing Choice legislation will provide the vital tools for communities across Greater Boston and the entire Commonwealth to foster the sustainable growth, affordability, and economic opportunity at the heart of our future,” **said Mayor Tom Koch**. “Governor Baker and Lt. Governor Polito have proven time and again that they understand the value of partnerships between the state, local governments and the private sector. We’re seeing the results of their work right here in downtown Quincy.”

Quincy has planned extensively for the future, working closely with state and local leaders to increase the housing stock and identify opportunities for growth. In 2007, the City developed the Quincy Center District Urban Revitalization and Development Plan, which first led to the demolition of decrepit Ross Garage to repurpose the area for transit-oriented development, with the support of a [2015 MassWorks grant](#) worth \$5.8 million that unlocked \$600 thousand in municipal funding. A [2017 MassWorks grant](#) worth \$2 million then funded critical drainage improvements to the nearby Greenway, leveraging \$40 million in District Improvement Financing to create more than 1 million square feet of retail, office, and medical space, and further stimulate investment downtown.

“JP Fuji Group employs about 200 employees just in the city of Quincy, and both of my current and hopeful employees have been facing challenges finding affordable housing in the city. If we can address the antiquated state zoning laws, we can remove barriers to produce new housing here and throughout the state,” **said Jimmy Liang, Owner of JP Fuji Group**. “As a Quincy resident, I am proud of the city’s leadership in building housing. However, other communities need to be able to build more too, which is why I endorse the Governor’s bill.”

“The creation of new housing in Quincy Center is the foundation of new business growth that is creating jobs and making this neighborhood once again the driving economic force of the City,” **said Dolly Di Pesa, CPA and Managing Partner of Di Pesa and Company**. “It’s this kind of growth – in the right places – that the Baker Administration’s Housing Choice legislation will make possible in communities throughout the state.”

“As Quincy continues to grow, it is important we work to ensure all residents can afford to live in our city,” **said Senator John Keenan**. “Especially as Quincy embraces new transportation initiatives and transit-oriented developments, it is vital that our zoning laws allow local officials the flexibility to prioritize appropriately located affordable housing. This legislation will help Quincy continue to prosper while providing suitable, affordable housing for all residents.”

Today’s show of support built on recent bipartisan endorsements from officials and organizations including [former Secretaries of Economic Development](#) from the Romney, Patrick, and Baker administrations. The bill was formally discussed at the [May 14th hearing of the Joint Committee on Housing](#). The legislation is part of the administration’s [Housing Choice Initiative](#), which provides incentives, technical assistance, and capital grant funding to encourage new housing production that meets the long-term needs of the Commonwealth’s growing, and aging, population.

The Baker-Polito Administration has shown a deep commitment to increasing the production of housing across income levels. Since 2015, the administration has invested more than \$1 billion in

affordable housing, resulting in the production and preservation of more than 17,000 housing units, including 15,000 affordable units. [In 2018, Governor Baker signed the largest housing bond bill](#) in Massachusetts history, committing more than \$1.8 billion to the future of affordable housing production and preservation. The Baker-Polito Administration has also advanced the development of more than 11,000 mixed-income housing units through the successful [MassWorks Infrastructure Program](#), reformed the [Housing Development Incentive Program](#), and worked with communities to implement smart-growth development and planning efforts.

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